

Contemplative Fire Post

February 2017 – no.19

The Hub – Friday 27th January “Thoughts after a meeting”

Ann Worrall writes:

“These are my personal ruminations and not a resume.... (minutes are available from Gill for your perusal).

The Contemplative Fire Hub met up for its second meeting on Friday 27th January at Boxmoor Trust (near Hemel again), on a bitter cold day. Several of us had had very long journeys (Wales, Sheffield, Nottingham, Bishops Stortford) and had stayed overnight to break the journey. A couple of us were unable to come and we missed them. It was really a pleasure to meet up with Companions working to steer a direction forward for our community-wide group in a way that is consensual, grounded and creative. I am particularly interested in how we find a way of interacting in the group so that all of us are able to explore different open shared models of leadership.

In our first meeting I had experienced a sense of us being anxious to fix all the outstanding issues, find venues, speakers, arrange the future as the past had been. Much of that is necessary but for me it felt rather like putting the cart before the horse. Did we need to continue what we had been doing for years? Were we all party to the same understanding of the huge groundwork and dedicated thoroughness that the founders had established? Did we all know the practices that had been established in the early years? I wondered what was the true gold in the heart of Contemplative Fire. Was it the same for all of us?



We worked with the Trefoil in the meeting to discern where we were in our own spiritual journeys. It was a privilege to hear each person share this with such honesty, yet love, humour



and tenderness. It seemed we were able to see where we might currently feel lacking or stronger, but the overwhelming sense was one of not judging, not being harsh on oneself, that one was trying one's best and that was good.



Sharing in this way helped to break down one's assumptions that others were bound to be 'better' at the Rhythm of Life than oneself. Then we saw confidence build and less sense of unconsciously waiting for the 'leader' to lead, but a stepping into the space or a stepping out. A consciousness of the ebb and flow of listening and speaking, of silences and of movement.

There is a certain apprehension in arranging an agenda, prioritising and shaping events of the day to the benefit of the group and the organisation. And when activities veer significantly off piste, it's an interesting exercise to know when to follow the flow and when to stick in a road block! This meeting was very free, but I believe all the agenda was completed, maybe in a different order, but what needed to take priority showed itself. We maintained the silences, the body prayer, the changing of spaces, but I think the sharing of our journeys was particularly important. We are Companions on the Way and I hope we felt each other's arms around our shoulders as we worked together. I certainly did.

And the gold in the heart of Contemplative Fire? Why, that space in the centre of the Trefoil vibrating with the possibility that is the Heart of Christ. I think we had a sense of it. Which is a privilege. Thank you fellow travellers, good companions.

Ann Worrall, Current Steward of The Hub.

CF North Way Beyond Religion - Embodiment

As part of our Way Beyond Religion evening focussing on *Embodiment*, we had the image of Antony Gormley's figure *Transport*.



"Transport" by Antony Gormley, the Jesus Chapel of the crypt, Canterbury Cathedral. Photo from <https://patricia1957.wordpress.com>

"The body is less a thing than a place; a location where things happen. Thought, feeling, memory and anticipation filter through it, sometimes staying but mostly passing on, like us in this great cathedral with its centuries of building, adaptation, extension and all the thoughts, feelings and prayers that people have had and transmitted here. Mind and body, church and state are polarities evoked by the life and death of Thomas Becket. We are all the temporary inhabitants of a body, it is our house, instrument and medium; through it all impressions of the world come and from it all our acts, thoughts and feelings are communicated, I hope to have evoked this in the most direct way possible".

Antony Gormley

We sat with words and phrases which arose from *Embodiment*. These are the words of one Companion:

*Embraced Mothered Blessed
Open Daring to follow
Immanuel Made new
Energised Nurturing
Trusting*

CF North – The Heart of Contemplative Fire

On 6th February we held an evening for people interested in knowing more about Contemplative Fire, to see (rather than hear) something of what we do. Of the 30 people who came, half were enquirers. The evening started with Jane introducing a visual Trefoil. We then experienced a Way Beyond Religion group sitting inside the circle and round the Trefoil, led by Catherine.



Way Beyond Religion at Whirlow

We were invited to "look through the window" and watch and listen, with everyone having the liturgy and sharing the three-fold reading of the Bible passage from Hosea. The Companions in the group lit a candle for the person or situation on their hearts, as a prayer for God's love to warm them and as a sign that they are held in the midst of that circle of love. (Chocolates were offered to all in place of the meal!) There was input about Listening 3's from Jacky and Graham, followed by Companions sharing something of what CF means to them.

Four enquirers who have been journeying with Contemplative Fire for some time subsequently decided to become Companions on the Way, and will be welcomed into the community at our evening in March.

Songs of Praise, Sunday 12th February *"Welsh Pilgrims"*

Aled Jones visited North Wales to follow the pilgrim trail to Bardsey Island. He spoke with Companion Susan Fogarty in St Hywyn's Church, Aberdaron.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b08fqnlx>

**Wisdom on the Way
All Shall Be Well**

**Saturday March 11th, 9.30 for 10-3
Box Moor Trust, London Rd, Hemel
Hempstead HP1 2RE**



**“Understanding the Revelations of
Julian of Norwich in the 21st century”**

**Invited speaker: Sister Pamela, Convent
of All Hallows**

THE NAKED GOD



**WRESTLING FOR A
GRACE-FUL HUMANITY**
VINCENT STRUDWICK
WITH JANE SHAW

‘A tremendously engaging and positive book.’ Rowan Williams

“The Naked God” is a tremendously engaging and positive book, as timely a reflection as any I’ve read on the uncertain but hopeful future of the community of God’s Kingdom.

Rowan Williams

‘This book is an absorbing personal and literary journey into the questions we must ask of ourselves and our societies, for the sake of a more hopeful future.’

Mona Siddiqui

Every generation puts “clothes” onto God to help their understanding; but the underlying reality of God still lies beneath those garments. If we go on clothing God only with garments

that are suitable for medieval Christendom, or any other age, then we can hardly expect that God will be understood in the 21st century.’

We live in an age in which many people are interested in spirituality but have been disillusioned by the Church and are unaware of what lies behind institutional religion. There is little knowledge of historical attempts to understand and to ‘clothe’ God, and it is more difficult for 21st century generations to find the tools with which to wrestle with the big questions about who we are and how we relate both to God and to each other.

In *The Naked God*, Vincent Strudwick – in collaboration with historian, theologian and priest Jane Shaw – invites all readers to become wrestlers: to discuss and try to understand God and religious institutions. Indeed, the inspiration for such a book came out of conversations initiated in a village pub by Strudwick with a group of ‘wrestlers’ with faith – some believers, some not; some church ‘belongers’, some not. ‘The book – like the wrestlers group where it began – is especially for people who are on the edges of, or outside, church life who really want to discuss God, and it is also for those inside the church who want to go on asking questions about the nature of God and the role of the church in the wider society today,’ says Strudwick.

Woven into the book are fascinating reflections by Vincent Strudwick on his experience of working as a priest and educator in the Church over a period of nearly sixty years. It is a work of historical theology, drawing on the wisdom of the past to inform the work of the present and to create a vision of hope for the future.

This book invites us to clothe God anew and re-imagine the Church in this century of crisis and change.

VINCENT STRUDWICK, an historical theologian, is Honorary and Emeritus Fellow of Kellogg College in the University of Oxford, and Honorary Canon Emeritus of Christ Church Cathedral, Oxford. **JANE SHAW** is a British historian and Anglican priest. She is Dean for Religious Life and Professor of Religious Studies at Stanford University, and Canon Emerita of Salisbury Cathedral. From press release- Will Parkes at willp@darton-longman-todd.co.uk

*“Dear Gill,
How kind of you to enquire about the book. It should be out this week and may be ordered from orders@norwichbooksandmusic.co.uk or phone 01603-785925. I do hope many members of CF may find it useful.*

Warmest wishes as always, Vincent” (Companion)



"Soul Space"

**Contemplative Fire Retreat at
Parcevall Hall, Appletreewick,
Skipton, N Yorkshire BD23 6DG, Fri
16th – Wed 21st June, 2017
Facilitator: Rev Anne Crosthwait,
Community Leader, Canada**

"Parker Palmer describes our soul as a wild animal, extremely resilient and extremely shy. If we go crashing through the woods the animals will flee from us. We must walk carefully, sit quietly, wait patiently and then they just might show up.

This year I'm delighted to offer as Contemplative Fire Silent Retreat "**Soul Space**", a week of creeping carefully and sitting silently "in the woods" together as we listen and invite our deepest self to show up. (Although there will be nature time, please hear the metaphor!) Most of the week will be in silence, however you will be offered some gentle listening/talking time in case your soul is wanting to show up. What animal might your soul be?

I look forward to meeting you on retreat in June. I've led many retreats of all sorts of shapes and sizes over the last twenty-five years, but it is very special to be invited to cross the pond and join my *Companions on the Way* with Contemplative Fire. I trust God's Spirit is present and active in our midst. What will we discover together? What does the Spirit want us to experience?"

The Contemplative Fire Annual Report & Accounts 2015 -16 are available from Gill at

info@contemplativefire.org

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God is in the Garden: Celebrating 25 years of Quiet Gardens

With guest speakers

**Revd Dr Andrew Walker and Revd Lucy
Winkett**

Also a chance to hear from, and to thank,
Revd Philip Roderick as he retires after 25 years
as Director

**at St John's Church, Waterloo, London SE1
8TY**

on Saturday 20 May 2017

Coffee from 10.15am

Programme 11am until 5pm

www.quietgarden.org

Trump and a Post-Truth World

Philip Roderick writes:

"Yesterday I was emailed a link to "Trump and a Post-Truth World", a free 80 page e-book by Ken Wilber analysing the Trump event from an integral perspective... as a contribution to the debate and discernment".

"The election of Donald Trump is an evolutionary self-correction that has been decades in the making - a backlash against the failure of the leading edge of consciousness (postmodernism and pluralism) to acknowledge the lie underlying the progress they've pursued: it's not equal, it's not consistent, and it doesn't make room for everyone. But a new integral force is emerging that can move beyond the narcissism and nihilism of political correctness to offer genuine leadership and move towards a developmental-based wisdom of greater wholeness. Read more in Ken Wilber's free eBook, Trump and a Post Truth World."

<http://integral-life->

home.s3.amazonaws.com/Trump%20and%20a%20Post-Truth%20World.pdf?mc_cid=7bc27b87f1&mc_eid=e620784f39